

ELDER'S DIGEST

Volume 3, Number 4

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Daniel 8:14

Revelation 12:17

Revelation 14

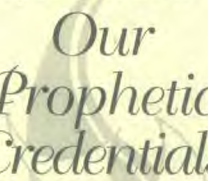
OUR
PROPHETIC
CREDENTIALS

Elder's Digest

NUMBER FOURTEEN

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The Elder's Loyalty to Jesus and His Denomination

Joel Sarli



Christian honesty requires that an elder be loyal to his denomination. Whether an elder is for, against, or in the middle of an issue doesn't matter; his position will be attacked. Those who intend to be the "Middle-of-the-Roaders" will come under the fire of different groups within the congregation. Some accept the responsibility of eldership in an Adventist congregation, and at the same time, try to undermine the confidence of the members in the doctrines and administrative system of their denomination, and show a lack of Christian character consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Every elder must make some decisions about his denominational loyalty and be prepared to face the consequences of those decisions.

Too many elders practice things in the congregation which they condemn in their own lives. Denominational bickering and personal ambitions of religious politicians have unnecessarily spawned and promoted an anti-Adventism attitude in some congregations. Careful consideration here will prevent an elder from making the denomination a playground for ministerial maneuvering to promote personal or group satisfaction.

Church members, congregations, conventions, general assemblies and boards have painstakingly and laboriously carved out plans and systems which have become masterpieces and have delivered them to the present generation of Adventists on silver platters. As E. G. White said, "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader" (3 *Testimony Treasures*, p. 443). Even though these masterpieces contain flaws and weaknesses, they are still masterpieces of the first magnitude in their realm.

Leaders of other generations suffered persecution in order to establish the administrative system which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has been responsible for the solid growth the church has experienced since its beginning.

The church is not perfect and it is therefore easy to fall into the trap of criticizing the way it is operating. Problems in the church are not a new phenomenon. "The church was defective and in need of stern reproof and chastisement, and John was inspired to record messages of warning and reproof and entreaty to those who, losing sight of the fundamental principles of the gospel, should imperil their hope of salvation" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 587). It is the responsibility of every leader in the church to be an instrument through which God can correct His people and prepare them for His kingdom.

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Elder's Digest

A resource for the local church elder

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The Man God Uses

Paul E. Little

The fact that God uses men at all is a wonderful reality. From one point of view He doesn't need us.

As Jesus once said, He could use stones if He wished, but He has chosen to use men. This means, of course, that He has chosen to use imperfect instruments. Yet our imperfection will not block God if our attitudes are such that we are willing to be used by Him. The man God uses is marked by a number of characteristics.

First, the man God uses is concerned only that God be glorified. He realizes his imperfection and is concerned only that God be glorified and His will be done. A subtlety of the devil is to entice men and women into Christian work for their own glory and self-advancement, but this is the road to spiritual disaster.

Second, the man God uses is totally committed to God so far as he knows his own heart and mind. Jesus declared in Luke 9:23: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Jesus always spelled out the cost of what it meant to follow Him. It means dying to oneself and one's own ambitions, one's own cleverness, one's own power, and following Christ. It means saying with Paul, as he did on the Damascus road, "Lord, what will You have me do?" It means commitment to the will of God, sight unseen, declaring that we trust God's character.

Most of us, if we were to admit the truth, say to the Lord, "Show me what Your will is so I can decide whether or not I want to go along with it." Though we may not intend it, this is a consummate insult to God's wisdom and love. We are really saying, "God, I think I know better than You do what will be best for me and what will make me happy," or "God, I don't really trust You. I have a feeling You are going to make me miserable if I commit my life to You without reservation." The God who loved us enough to give His Son to die for us on the cross is not about to shortchange us in life when we come to Him in total commitment.

Third, the man God uses is the man who has faith. Faith can be defined as confident trust. It is important to realize that faith is not a sophisticated synonym for superstition. In the Christian sense, faith is based on evidence, and it is a faith that goes beyond reason but not

against it. Faith involves believing in unseen realities. Those who can see with the eye of faith have a grasp of the reality of God (what He can and will do in a given situation) and are not simply wishful thinkers. This faith also involves believing in the power of God as well as in His character and integrity.

Fourth, the man God uses is the one who has seen himself and seen God and His power in experimental, as well as propositional, terms. He really trusts God's power and wisdom. The point of the story of the widow and the unjust judge in Luke 18 is not that we have to nag God, but rather that if the judge who was crooked to the core gave this widow justice because she was persistent, how much more will our heavenly Father, who is not unjust and who loves us, hear us when we come to Him. The widow went to that judge knowing that he was her only hope. This must characterize us in prayer if we are to be used of God.

Sometimes people say, "There's nothing else we can do but pray," as though all the practical things have been done and now we can only turn to the impractical. Actually, prayer should be our highest priority. We must believe that God is our only hope, and He *is*, if we want the supernatural work to be done.

Sometimes God puts us in a place of absolute desperation to bring us to this conviction. He told Gideon to reduce the number of people in his band to three hundred because He said if there are more than that Israel would "vaunt themselves against me, saying, 'My own hand has delivered me.'" We must trust God in His wisdom that what He does for us will be best.

Sometimes we ask amiss in prayer and God answers us, and with the answer, sends leanness of soul. But if we trust that what He does for us will be right, He will not let us down. The expression, "He gives the very best to those who leave the choice with Him," is true. We must trust the love of God. The supreme test of faith for the non-Christian is often the question of whether or not God exists. For the Christian, however, it is whether or not God is good. In the face of tragedy, only trust in His character will carry us through.

It is a great comfort to know that God does not ask

us to understand Him, only that we trust Him.

Fifth, the man God uses is the man who trusts God and His providence in all that is past, in His present working and in the future. It means accepting as from God our background, our personality, our gifts, or the lack of them. We recognize that everything that has happened to us up to this point has been, not by chance but, by the providential hand of God. At the same time, we recognize that God is working in our present circumstances. He is not on vacation. He has not forgotten us. Rather, He is concerned and loves to work out His will in our lives.

Sixth, the man God uses is the one who can rest the future in the hands of this all loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God. The future is unknown to us but is completely known to God. He knows the way that we will take. We know that our ultimate destiny is to be with Christ forever, and we know that our future is secure in His hands. The man God uses rests in this knowledge and radiates peace and confidence in the midst of uncertainty and turbulence.

Seventh, the man God uses is the one who obeys God at all costs. This involves an awareness of what the commands of God are and a familiarity with His Word, the Scripture. His will is much more easily discernible than we think if we will expose ourselves to what He has already said.

Eighth, the man God uses is the one who recognizes he can do nothing in his own strength. Is anything more impossible than trying to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh? I do not mean that we are to be passive, but rather by faith we should lay hold of all the resources we have in Christ. Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (R.S.V.).

Finally, the man God uses is the one who walks with God daily by reading His Word and fellowshiping and communing with Him in prayer. To what extent are you and I qualified to be used of God? Let us examine ourselves in His presence and confess those areas of sin, failure, and lack in our lives, and then by faith recommit ourselves, without reservation, to Him who is willing to take us and use us for His power and glory. Only in this way will our lives be an investment in eternity. **E**

Paul E. Little, was an associate professor of evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, when he wrote this article.

The Elder's Loyalty to Jesus and His Denomination

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There are some simple rules which will help you, my dear elder in the local congregation, maintain a right relationship with our denomination and keep your honor with God.

1. Depend on the Lord to guide you. He leads you through the Bible, the messages that came to the remnant church through the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White, and the consensus of your brothers and sisters around the world.
2. Remember that the denomination has done much for you. Love it and defend it.
3. Be cooperative with your pastor without becoming a blind follower or a dumb slave.
4. Don't become involved in any conflicting political maneuverings of men.
5. Always remember that God doesn't guide a man but a people.
6. Your denomination did not come into existence by the will of men. God, Himself brought it about in fulfillment of Bible prophecies.
7. According to the prophecies of the book of Revelation, there will be no other church in these last days. This is the final one.

In conclusion, I urge you to keep yourself obligated only to God and stay in His "ship." Even if you see some mistakes made by other leaders, try to help correct the faults rather than get out and start another church which is less "seaworthy."

In this issue of *Elder's Digest*, we focus on the prophetic credentials of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, our denomination, and God's church for this time. It seems that some have been confused and deceived by clever words spoken here and there. It is time for elders to know the foundations of God's people. I invite you to review the biblical marks of authenticity of the Adventist movement and remember that Jesus Himself warns us in relationship to these last days: "Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matt 24:5 NIV). **E**

The Monthly Elders' Meeting

Carl Coffman

Is there a need for a monthly meeting of the local board of church elders? Some pastors hold such a meeting regularly, some do not. Is the monthly meeting of the church board adequate to care for the business of a growing church? Is *another* meeting with the elders simply adding to the demand on one's time? Or is there a purpose for such a meeting in order to enrich the local church through more effective ministry of its local elders? Would not such lead to closer unity of the entire church, and contribute to a more rapidly maturing church, as well as to the finishing of God's work?

VARIED PRACTICES

The varied practices that exist in different churches relative to an elders' meeting may reflect the fact that the need for and purpose of the elders' meeting has not been included in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*.

The *Church Manual* does state that the office of elder ranks as "the highest and most important" in the organization of the local church (page 45, 1995 edition). In light of this, it seems imperative that some organization and possibly some training be instituted in order to enable the church elder to accomplish his best while serving in the high office entrusted to him by God and the members of the church.

PRACTICAL RESULT OF ELDERS' MEETING

A regular monthly meeting of the board of elders can be a strengthening and unifying factor for the church. First of all, it affords the pastor an opportunity to counsel with a group of mature individuals whose experience and dedication can be very valuable to the pastor in finding a way through both routine business and difficult problems. Foolish is the leader who risks mistakes in leadership when he/she has a group of associates in the local church who can assist in finding the wisest course of action. Unity, strength, and confidence result where the pastor and elders work together to find the most effective ways of furthering God's work.

HELPING IN STRUCTURING THE CHURCH BOARD AGENDA

If the elders' meeting is scheduled a day or two before the monthly church board meeting, the elders can have an opportunity to suggest items that should be discussed by the board members. Thus the elders' participate in the actual planning of the board agenda. If difficult items are to be presented to the board, the pastor can seek the guidance of the elders and find the very best way in which that item can be presented and handled at the board meeting. The writer has seen quite a number of serious clashes avoided as the result of this careful study with the elders beforehand. The danger that some might see here of an attempt by the pastor and elders to "railroad" an item through the board meeting is, of course, something that will be avoided by those involved in Christian church leadership.

THE AGENDA OF THE ELDERS' MEETING

The elders' meeting is *the* place for making assignments in connection with their work. Sabbath platform schedules can be discussed and agreed upon. The guardianship program enables the elder to assist new members to grow spiritually. It is vital that this program, if used, be reviewed monthly so that the elder, the newer church members involved, and the pastor can work at maximum effectiveness for a healthy church.

TRAINING PROCESS FOR THE ELDERS

An important function that should be part of the regular meeting of the elders is a generally overlooked one. If the elders are to work at peak efficiency certain items of training should become a regular part of the agenda. This might take only ten to fifteen minutes per meeting, and in case of pressure of business would not have to be included every month. But the local elder's service in areas such as how to handle the announcements properly, especially last-moment items, how to pray in public, how to call for the offering, what to include in a benediction, how to visit a nonmember or backslidden

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Intercessory Prayer as Part of Local Elder's Ministry

Mark Finley

Mike was troubled. About midway through an evangelistic series, three young girls who had been attending regularly approached him, saying, "We have been looking into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but just yesterday we talked with our pastor. We wanted to inform you tonight that we are not coming back. Here are the magazines and books you have given us."

As Mike drove home from the evangelistic meeting that evening, his thoughts were in a whirl. What could he do? Should he visit the girls? Should he call them? Their decision seemed so final. Deeply concerned, he drove to the church. It was 10:00 in the evening. He opened the door and sat down in the darkness of the sanctuary. Dropping to his knees, a great burden flowed from him for these three girls. As he prayed, earnestly pleading with God for their souls, a peace came over him. He did not know for certain how God was going to work, but he knew his prayer was answered. It was after midnight when he got back into the car and drove home.

Two days later, on Sabbath, as Mike was greeting visitors in the church foyer, he noticed these three girls walking cautiously up the steps. In utter amazement he greeted them. "Girls! What are you doing here?"

Quickly they responded, "We just wanted to come and visit your church. Is it O.K.?"

For the next few weeks Mike watched as God kept impressing the girls to come back to the evangelistic meetings. Soon they were open to his Bible studies. Later, as they stood in the baptismal pool at the New Haven, Connecticut, Adventist Church, he knew once again that the power of effective soul-winning comes on our knees, pleading with God for the salvation of souls.

Recently on the "It Is Written" television program, I interviewed Larry Dorsey, the former chief of the medical staff of the Dallas General Hospital. Dr. Dorsey has extensively studied the role of intercessory prayer in healing. After reviewing 130 medical studies of patients recovering from a life-threatening disease in the last 25 years, Dr. Dorsey has concluded that scientifically there is a dramatic difference when people are prayed for. If this is true in the physical realm of healing, think of how

much truer it is in the realm of spiritual healing—conversion.

Prayer + Faith = Souls

There are *two essential ingredients* in soul winning. First John 5:14-16 lists them both: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."

Our passage reveals things about successful soul winning: the necessity of intercessory prayer, and the necessity of implicit faith.

"Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509).

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 525).

Winning a soul is not like repairing an automobile or making a cake in which there is a certain formula and anybody who follows it will be successful. No, each person is different, and although there are basic soul-winning principles which apply to every situation, we need the wisdom of God in applying them. Otherwise, minds will not be impressed. Lives will be left unchanged.

PRAYER EMPOWERED CHRIST

Scripture clearly reveals that Christ's power came from the secret place of prayer. He prayed in the wilderness of temptation when the adversary battled for His soul. He prayed the night before He selected His disciples. He prayed through the night before He delivered the nobleman's son from a demon. He prayed in Gethsemane before the cross.

Soul-winners seem sometimes to think they are too busy to pray. Jesus did not. "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that

were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:32-35).

With the setting sun the whole city came, clamoring for His attention. What evangelist has ever been busier? But busy nights were not allowed to interfere with praying mornings. There was power at night because there was prayer in the morning.

PRAYER DOES FOUR THINGS

Why is it necessary to pray for souls? Doesn't God already want to win them? Isn't He doing everything He can without our praying? There is a great deal about the science of prayer that the human mind cannot comprehend. This should not discourage us. Simply because we do not understand all about electricity does not keep us from employing the benefits of light, heat, and the electrical power. In the late 1800s almost nothing was known about Vitamin B, yet an individual eating whole wheat bread received as much benefit from Vitamin B then as we do now. The point is simply this: It is not necessary to know everything about something to benefit from it.

Although we will never fully understand the science of prayer, there are four reasons we should pray for souls:

1. *Prayer enables God to speak to us about sins in our own lives which are a hindrance to successful soul-winning.* The Israelites had just been defeated by the men from a tiny city called Ai. Joshua entered into earnest prayer over the situation, and God said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies" (Joshua 7:10-12). God's power was limited because there was sin among His people. He used the prayer of Joshua as an opportunity to speak to him about sin.

Very often as you and I come to pray for others, Jesus impresses our own hearts with the need of a closer fellowship with Him. In the atmosphere of prayer, soul winning is the fulcrum by which Jesus pries sin out of our lives. We say, "Oh, Lord, I never saw myself that way before. If that is the way I really am, if my bitterness, my

jealousy, my pride are standing between me and You, oh, Lord, take it away so You can effectively witness through me to win that soul." In prayer Jesus reveals to us attitudes that inhibit His working through us.

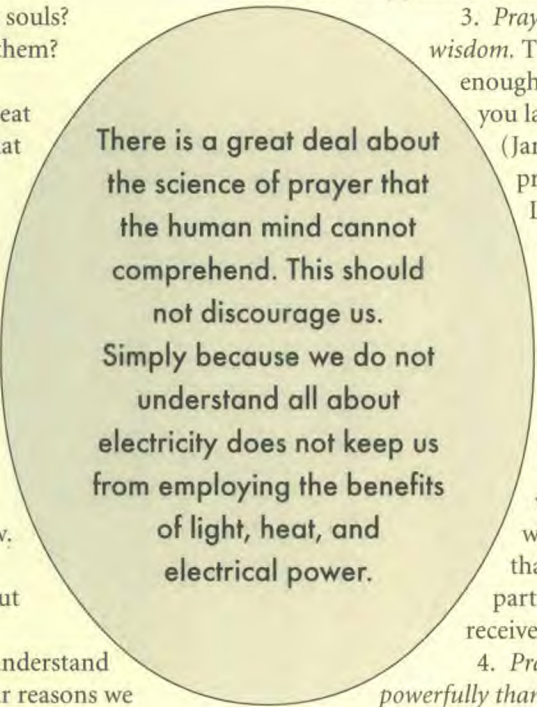
2. *Prayer deepens our desire concerning the thing for which we are praying.* One of the reasons Jesus does not immediately move into a life as we pray is to enable us to come in such close harmony with Him that we will work harder with Him for the salvation of that particular soul. The more we pray for someone's salvation, the more we desire it. The more we desire it, the more we will look for creative opportunities to reach that person.

3. *Prayer puts us in touch with divine wisdom.* The only One who is really wise enough to win souls is God. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). Isaiah 50:4, speaking prophetically of Jesus, says, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Only Jesus gives us the tongue of the learned. He reveals the right words to say to men and women. Without His wisdom we may have keys, but we do not know which key fits where. It is the wisdom of Jesus that chooses the right key to fit each particular heart and opens it to receive the treasures of the gospel.

4. *Prayer enables God to work more powerfully than He could if we did not pray.*

Daniel 10 tells how the heavenly messenger explained to Daniel that a great battle had been going on over the mind of Cyrus. The good angels attempted to drive the evil angels back so that Cyrus could make the right decision. The evil angels attempted to destroy the good angels, to enshroud Cyrus in darkness. As Daniel prayed, this battle raged. Finally, Jesus came down, beat the evil angels back, and gave Cyrus an opportunity to make a clear and intelligent decision. Israel was allowed to go free. Daniel's intercessory prayer proved effective.

Isn't God doing everything He can to save a person before we pray? Yes. But when we pray as did Daniel, it enables God to do more than He could have done before. God has voluntarily chosen to limit Himself in the great controversy between good and evil. He has chosen not to violate human will. When one human mind prays for another it enables Him to work on minds more dramatically than He otherwise could.



PRAY SPECIFICALLY

This matter of praying for souls is an individual work. It is not simply that we quickly pray for 100 names on a pray list so something magic will happen. There are some forms of life for which multiple births are usual. An opossum, for instance, can give birth to a litter of a dozen or more. Not so with human beings. Occasionally we see twins born, and still more seldom, triplets or quadruplets. But most humans are born one at a time. And that's the way it is with soul winning. If you want to win souls, begin with one.

Notice the counsel that Job gives us in praying for souls: "O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor." This is our work, pleading before God for the specific needs of John or Joseph, Mary or Alice. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23). Do you have a prayer list? Are there men and women that you are holding up before God in prayer? Soul-winning is God's work, not man's. Prayer opens our hearts and minds to be used as channels for the Holy Spirit's working.

PRAY IN GROUPS

In addition to praying alone for souls, notice the instruction Jesus gives us: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 19, 20).

Ellen White adds: "Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then still another?" (*Testimonies of the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 21).

These little prayer bands provide the basis for successful evangelism. The work of conversion is not natural; it is supernatural. A salesman might be able to persuade a person to buy a new car. Advertising companies may entice an individual to purchase a new suit of clothing. A real estate broker might interest a person in an attractive new home. These sales people can get results by following certain techniques. They can sell their product. It might even be possible for a Christian minister to persuade a person to join the church. But only God can bring genuine conversion to the soul. Successful evangelism must include a ministry of prayer.

Develop a prayer list of specific individuals. Seek God for those people each day, write down their names, petition heaven for their souls. If possible choose a prayer partner. Together bombard heaven with your prayers. God will answer. You will become a channel of His abundant blessings. The river of the Water of Life will be

poured out through you to touch another life for the Kingdom of God.

The New Testament reveals that the evangelistic explosion throughout the book of Acts was the result of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Since we are living in the days of earth's final harvest, it is essential for the success of any evangelistic campaign that each of us consecrate ourselves to God for service, are of one accord, and are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Without prayer spiritual renewal is impossible. As public evangelists unite with local congregations in an integrated, coordinated approach in winning souls for Christ, praying for the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God will give us unusual results. The Spirit will be poured out and souls will be won. **E**

Mark Finley writes from Thousand Oaks, California, where he serves the church as director of It Is Written, an international evangelistic telecast program.

The Monthly Elders' Meeting

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member, even a layman's course in homiletics, and other areas pertinent to the elder's service can be strengthened in brief training sessions. This idea of training will be discussed in detail later in this series.

FOSTER UNITY IN PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

Certainly, the regular monthly elders' meeting is crucial to a well-functioning church. The first step toward recognizing the need for conducting such meetings regularly is that of understanding that elders and pastors must work together as an effective "team" for the furtherance of the work of God's church. When we recognize this the need to continue this important counseling and training session will be evident, and we will reap the very positive results certain to follow.

Where the church is very small and there are perhaps only two or three elders it would still be well for the pastor to meet with them on a regular basis to plan the work together. **E**

Carl Coffman, lives in Calistoga, California. He was director of the Religion Department at Andrews University when he wrote this article.

A Biblical Perspective of the Local Elder in the Congregation

P. G. Damsteegt and W. Floyd Bresee

The New Testament mentions two church offices—those of the elder and the deacon. The importance of these offices is underscored by the high moral and spiritual requirements set for those who would fill them. The church recognized the sacredness of the calling to leadership through ordination, the laying on of the hands (Acts 6: 6; 13: 2, 3; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 5: 22).

THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF ELDERS

The “elders” (*Greek, presbuteros*) or “bishops” (*episkopos*) were the most important officers of the church. The term elder means older one, implying dignity and respect. His position was similar to that of the one who had supervision of the synagogue. The term *bishop* means “overseer.” Paul used these terms interchangeably, equating *elders* with *overseers* or *bishops* (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7).

Those who held this position supervised the newly formed churches. *Elder* referred to the status or rank of the office, while *bishop* denoted the duty or responsibility of the office—“overseer.” Since the apostles also called themselves elders (1 Peter 5: 1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1), it is apparent that there were both local elders and itinerant elders, or elders at large. But both kinds of elder functioned as shepherds of the congregations.

THE QUALIFICATION FOR THE ELDERSHIP

To qualify for the office of elder a person must be “above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (1 Tim. 3:1-7 NIV; cf. Titus 1:5-9).

Before appointment to the office, therefore, the candidate must have demonstrated leadership ability in

his/her home. “The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the man rule his own house with honor? What character have his children? Will they do honor to the father’s influence? If he has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home, in managing his own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there. The candidate, if married, should demonstrate leadership in the home before being trusted with the responsibility of the leadership of God’s household,” (1 Tim. 3:15, NIV).

Because of the importance of the office Paul charged, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily” (1 Tim. 5:22).

THE ELDER’S RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

An elder is first and foremost a spiritual leader. He is chosen “to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28). His/her responsibilities include supporting weak members (Acts 20:35), admonishing the wayward (1 Thess. 5:12), and being alert for teachings that would create divisions (Acts 20:29-31). Elders must model the Christian lifestyle (Heb. 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3) and set examples of liberality (Acts 20:35).

THE APPROPRIATE ATTITUDE OF THE CONGREGATION TOWARD THE ELDERS

To a large extent, effective church leadership depends on the loyalty of the membership. Paul encourages believers to respect their leaders and to “Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:13, NIV). “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well,” he said, “are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17, NIV).

Scripture makes clear the need to respect church leadership: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account” (Heb. 13:17, NIV; cf. 1 Peter 5: 5).

When members make it difficult for the leaders to perform their God-assigned responsibilities, both will experience grief and miss the joy of God’s prosperity.

Believers are encouraged to observe the leaders' Christlike lifestyles. "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7, NIV). They should pay no attention to gossip. Paul warned, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses" (I Tim. 5:19).

ORDINATION OF LOCAL ELDER

Election to the office of elder does not in itself qualify one as an elder. Ordination is required before an elder has authority to function in that office. During the interim between election and ordination, the elected elder may function as church leader but not administer the ordinances of the church.

The ordination service is only performed by an ordained minister with credentials from the local conference. It may be a courtesy to invite a visiting ordained minister to assist in the ordination, but only on the specific request of the local conference officers would the visiting ordained minister conduct the ordination.

The sacred rite of ordination should be simply performed in the presence of the church, and may include a brief outline of the office of elder, the qualities required, and the principal duties the elder will be authorized to perform for the church. After the exhortation, the minister, assisted by their ordained ministers and/or local ordained elders who are participating in the service, will ordain the elder by prayer and the laying on of hands.

Having once been ordained as a church elder, ordination is not required again upon reelection to office as an elder, or upon election as elder of another church, provided that good and regular standing in the church has been maintained.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE ELDER TO THE ORDAINED MINISTER

In a case where the conference committee assigns an ordained minister to labor as a pastor of a church, he should be considered as the ranking officer, and the local elder as his assistant. Their work is closely related; they should therefore work together harmoniously. The minister should not gather to himself all lines of responsibility, but should share these with the local elder and other officers. The minister serving the church regularly as pastor acts as the chairman of the church board. There may be circumstances, however, when it would be advisable for the elder to act in this capacity. The pastoral work of the church should be shared by both. The elder should, in counsel with the minister, carry much of the pastoral responsibility, visiting the church members, ministering to the sick, and

encouraging those who are disheartened. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this part of an elder's work, who as an undershepherd should exercise a constant vigilance over the flock. If the appointed pastor is a licensed minister, the local church or churches that he/she serves should elect him/her as an elder.

Because the pastor is appointed to the position in the local church by the conference, he/she serves the church as a conference worker, and is responsible to the conference committee, yet he/she maintains a sympathetic and cooperative relation to and works in harmony with all the plans and policies of the local church. ■

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A Final Appeal to the Church

*I beg of you,
study, pray, be
aware of what is
ahead, then with
God's help
prepare your-
selves and your
people to meet it!*

I take some of my thoughts from material that Pastor and Mrs. Ralph Neall have written describing how a sect typically evolves into a church. They say a sect is often begun by a charismatic leader with tremendous drive and commitment and that it arises as a protest against worldliness and formalism in a church. It is generally embraced by the poor. The rich would lose too much by joining it, since it is unpopular, despised, and persecuted by society in general. It has definite beliefs firmly held by zealous members. Each member makes a personal decision to join it and knows what he believes. There is little organization or property, and there are few buildings. The group has strict standards and controls on behavior. Preachers, often without education, arise by inner compulsion. There is little concern about public relations.

And then it passes on to the second generation. With growth there comes a need for organization and buildings. As a result of industry and frugality, members become prosperous. As prosperity increases, persecution begins to wane. Children born into the movement do not have to make personal decisions to join it. They do not necessarily know what they believe. They do not need to hammer out their own positions. These have been worked out for them. Preachers arise more by selection and by apprenticeship to older workers than by direct inner compulsion.

In the third generation, organization develops and institutions are established. The need is seen for schools to pass on the faith of the fathers. Colleges are established. Members have to be exhorted to live up to the standards, while at the same time the standards of membership are being lowered. The group becomes lax about disfellowshipping non-practicing members. Missionary zeal cools off. There is more concern over public relations. Leaders study methods of propagating their faith, sometimes employing extrinsic rewards as motivation for service by the members. Youth question why they are different from others, and intermarry with those not of their faith.

In the fourth generation there is much machinery; the number of administrators increases while the number of workers at the grass-roots level becomes proportionately less. Great church councils are held to define doctrine. More schools, universities, and seminaries are established. These go to the world for accreditation and tend to become secularized. There is a reexamination of positions and modernizing of methods. Attention is given to contemporary culture, with an interest in the arts: music, architecture, literature. The movement seeks to become "relevant" to contemporary society by becoming involved with popular causes. Services become formal. The group enjoys complete acceptance by

Robert Pierson

We are
Seventh-
day
Adventists!
Let us
remain
Seventh-
day
Adventists!
This is
God's last
church
with
God's last
message!

the world. The sect has become a church!

This must never happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church! This will not happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is not just another church—it is God's church!

SUBTLE FORCES ALREADY IN THE CHURCH

Already there are subtle forces that are beginning to stir. Regrettably there are a few in the church who belittle the inspiration of the total Bible, who question the first 11 chapters of Genesis, who challenge the Spirit of Prophecy's short chronology of the Bible, and who subtly and not so subtly attack the Spirit of Prophecy. There are some who point to the reformers and contemporary theologians as a source and a norm for Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. There are those who allegedly are tired of the hackneyed phrases of Adventism. There are those who wish to forget the standards of the church we love. There are those who covet and would court the favor of Christian bodies around them; those who would throw off the mantle of a peculiar people; and those who would go the way of the secular, materialistic world.

Fellow leaders, beloved brethren and sisters—don't let it happen! I appeal to you as earnestly as I know how, don't let it happen! We are Seventh-day Adventists! Let us remain Seventh-day Adventists! This is God's last church with God's last message!

You are the men and women, the leaders, whom God is counting on to keep the

Seventh-day Adventist Church God's remnant church, the church God has destined to triumph!

The servant of the Lord says, "Fearful perils are before those who bear responsibilities in the Lord's work—perils the thought of which makes me tremble" (*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 391). And in Ezekiel 22:30 we read, "I looked for a man among them who could build up a barricade, who could stand before me in the breach to defend the land from ruin" (NEB).

I believe that God is looking for men and women, intrepid leaders, men and women who love God's church and God's truth more than they love their lives, to see that this church under God goes through to the kingdom. The task ahead of us is not going to be easy. If I understand the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy aright, ahead lies a time of trouble, a time of challenge such as this church and this world have never before known.

DECEIVED BY THE FALSE REFORMATION

The servant of the Lord tells us, "The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church would be discarded. Our religion would be

changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath, of course, would be lightly regarded, as would the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless" (*Ibid.*, Book I, pp. 204, 205).

STUDY, PRAY, BE AWARE, STAND ON THE RIGHT SIDE

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its alpha years ago. You and I are the leaders who may well face the omega that will be of the same subtle, devilish origin. Its effect will be more devastating than the alpha. Brethren, I beg of you, study, pray, be aware of what is ahead, then with God's help prepare yourselves and your people to meet it!

"God calls for men who are prepared to meet emergencies, men who in a crisis will not be found standing on the wrong side" (Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 5, 1903).

"We are pressing on to the final conflict, and this is no time to compromise. It is no time to hide your colors. When the battle wages sore, let no one turn traitor. It is no time to lay down or conceal our weapons, and give Satan the

Concluded on page 30

Adventist Amalekites

Unity does not demand that we keep silent in the face of sin or error, but it does demand responsibility.

Ancient Israel had those who followed, sniping at its heels to disturb and harass. So does the church. Unity does not demand that we keep silent in the face of sin or error, but it does demand responsibility. In today's culture, everyone wants to do their own thing and be heard. In politics, strident voices shout loud and long as to how the king, prime minister, or president ought to run the country. Unity of thought and action among any sizable group is about as rare as a penguin at the equator.

Disunity is bad enough in the political world, but tragically the intensity and confusion of life in general has spilled over into religious circles. The church is not immune to elements of discord and strife, nor is our own Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Fortunately for our church—both leadership and laity—a remarkable degree of unity and loyalty exists among the vast majority. Those in our midst whose main objective in life seems to be making waves and rocking the good ship Zion are still in the minority even if they sometimes make a disproportionate splash. Although their numbers, I believe, are relatively small, I am deeply concerned about this class of individuals whom I call “Adventist Amalekites.”

The term *Amalekite* usually evokes thoughts of a rather fierce, offensive tribe which relentlessly caused Israel problems during their wanderings from Egypt to Canaan. After Israel's settlement in Canaan, Saul and David had to continue the fight against these inveterate enemies of God. In modern parlance, the Amalekites were the ever-present “snipers” shooting at the people of God during their struggles in the wilderness and in Canaan. According to some scholars, they were related to the Israelites through Esau. If this is correct, then in a sense they were members of the same church! These defiant people harassed God's wearied ranks until they finally sealed their doom under the judgments of God. “I will completely erase the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven” (Ex. 17:14, NIV).

A CHURCH UNDER ATTACK

Spiritual Israel today faces a somewhat similar situation in its journey to heaven's Canaan. God's weak, faulty, but precious church is under attack by journals, books, tapes, pamphlets, magazines, and circulars of every description. Viewpoints range from the ultraconservative to the ultra-liberal. Some profess

J. Robert Spangler

*Those
who
have
dedicated
their lives
to
“setting
the
record
straight”
are
jeopard-
izing
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salvation.*

great loyalty by claiming to defend the purity of the church's faith and practice. They castigate the church for abandoning what they perceive to be its original heritage. Others are obviously cynical and faith-destroying. They criticize the church for clinging to outmoded forms and failing to move into what they see as enlightened Christianity. Some of the material comes under the guise of sophisticated scholarship, while other material is quite crude in both design and content. The subject range is as broad as the church. There is virtually nothing the church stands for, in doctrine, practice, policy, or structure, that has not come under suspicion, been questioned, called upon to change, or attacked. The content is not all bad, nor is it all good. Some of it is plainly “strange fire.”

Several common threads run through these productions. They claim to be speaking for and/or to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They claim to represent Adventist thought. If not claiming to have “the truth,” they claim to be searching for it. These missives also have in common a lavish treatment of the wrongs of the church and a very stingy record in offering solutions.

My concern for these critics, whether on the right or the left, is twofold: First, I am concerned for their own souls, and second, I am concerned for the souls of those who are adversely influenced by them.

I don't presume to judge the motives of these writers and speakers. Yet, looking at the materials they produce, I

wonder how much time they spend praying for God's Spirit to bless this church, compared to what they expend criticizing it. Furthermore, I have wondered at times what their tithe and offering records have looked like. It would be strange indeed if one who feels so constrained to attack the church should also feel constrained to support it financially. Not that anyone's relationship to the church saves that person. But where we expend our time, energies, and financial resources certainly indicates where our interests lie.

It seems to me that those who have dedicated their lives to “setting the record straight” are jeopardizing their salvation. Need I remind us that as Christians we are in a life-and-death struggle, with Christ on one side pleading for our surrender to Him, and Satan on the other side, pulling us down to perdition? The enemy is quite aware of how attractive the critical and negative can be.

For example, offer people 10 pages of exposés of church problems and criticism of church policies and leadership. At the same time offer them 10 pages of soul-winning accounts, reports of progress in the church, or God's blessings in individual lives. Which will be read first, or read at all? The fallen mental chemistry of all of us seems to enjoy the former. We revel in juicy details of wrong and errors. Such may sell newspapers, but it will not build Christian character (see Phil. 4:8). How much we like to discuss the latest rumor, but how seldom do we find ourselves talking about our Savior!

BE AWARE OF SPIRITUAL SICKNESS

Furthermore, I have learned that those who feed on criticism and are ever searching through the dirt and filth for errors and corruption in the church often fail to find true fulfillment in life themselves. Strangely, some try to build up their own egos by tearing something down. It is far easier to expose sin and evil than to expound on the cross of Christ.

Once we allow ourselves to travel through the valleys of vinegar, the sweetness and wholesomeness of what Jesus is doing in and through His church goes unnoticed. The mind sees what it is trained to dwell upon. Maliciousness, skepticism, and cynicism are diseases difficult to overcome.

I know this from personal experience. In my earlier years, I developed a rather critical attitude. I sadly confess that early in my ministry I thrived, at times, on the faults of church leaders. I remember a fiery letter I wrote to my old friend F. D. Nichol. His sweet reply disarmed me completely. (The point I was making was not necessarily wrong, but my attitude and spirit were!)

As years went by, I found myself feeding more and more on the church's problems. I didn't publicly criticize, but in my heart I found an estrangement with my brethren, which left me empty. My relationship with Jesus Christ became extremely fragile. Personal devotions were often interrupted by irritation over something I knew was happening in the church. The day came when I

reached the conclusion that my own soul was at stake. I was building barriers between my own heart and my fellow workers and my God. Gradually, through the help of the Lord, I began to look for the good and to see the best. I still have a long way to go, but I thank God for the direction the Lord is leading me.

So I fear for the spiritual well-being of those whose work revolves around the negative.

Then, too, their production and organizations require cash to operate. The amount of money siphoned from the church by these "Adventist Amalekites" and their supporters would be enough, no doubt, to hold sizable yearly evangelistic crusades in major cities or to expand our radio-TV ministry. Every dollar diverted from the true mission of the church hinders the fulfillment of the commission God has given us.

My second concern is for our poor sheep who get hold of these documents and read them. Deep impressions are made on their minds. Questions are raised. Doubts are strengthened. Who is accountable, then, for souls that have been discouraged and misled? Who will eradicate the poison that has been taken in by the reader?

Think of what would happen if the tongues and pens of those turning out these negative productions would be used to the glory of God in speaking words of encouragement and confidence! I urge those with talents for speaking and writing to use these abilities to strengthen God's

people and to encourage His leaders who are striving to advance the gospel. Let those who have a burden to set things straight go to their neighbors with the glorious news of Christ's plan to set straight sin-twisted lives. Let those who feel convicted that they must explore every facet of some church problem and expose it to those within and without the church begin to explore the fantastic truths in God's Word and set these before the people. Let those who rejoice in ferreting out some secret sin of the brethren study the secret and hidden things in the Word.

LET US LINK ARMS TOGETHER

I plead with "Adventist Amalekites" to stop this sniping at the heels of modern spiritual Israel. Rather, let us link arms together and in true Christian love work out our differences. Then we can join in the unity for which Jesus so eloquently prayed. One thing is certain. No one can truly pray the prayer of Christ in John 17 and at the same time undermine the church.

"But," says someone, "unity does not mean ignoring problems, hoping they will disappear. Unity does not mean saying all is well with the church, when all is not well."

I agree. Lest anyone feel I have assumed the ostrich posture, let me assure you that I am as aware as anyone that this church has problems that need to be acknowledged and solved. (In fact, I am probably more aware of these problems than are some who spend their time mimeographing, printing,

and recording what they do know!) I am aware of the moral and ethical problems that may exist at times among both ministers and members in our church. But I do not believe that the solution to these things lies in sowing cynicism, criticism, castigation, innuendo, and suspicion by means of proliferating productions that spread these matters before all who will listen. I don't deny that the church has problems, although I also believe that she has more wholesome, positive, and uplifting aspects than her critics can imagine. I don't deny that we as leaders in the church have made mistakes and that in some cases we may have brought upon ourselves the criticisms that we are receiving. The unity Christ prayed for doesn't demand that we keep silent in the face of sin or error. But it does demand that we respond to such things as responsible members of Christ's body. There are proper ways for effecting changes and righting wrongs and getting the church back on track when she has lost her way.

The tragedy is to see such a prodigal squandering of precious brainpower and money in such negative pursuits when the church needs every bit of help possible in doing a constructive work in forwarding the banner of Prince Emmanuel throughout the world. **E**

J. Robert Spangler was a pastor, evangelist, Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference, and for 23 years Editor of Ministry. He died on September 19, 1997 in the line of duty working for his Lord.

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Facing Pressures on Adventism Today

*What is the
cause of a
deplorable and
reprehensible
decay in
Christendom
today? How
does it affect
Adventism?*

Christendom is currently in extremely poor shape in many areas of the world. Simply told, the story is one of dwindling membership, a dwindling ministry, and dwindling finances.

Take the situation in England. In his book, *The British Churches Today*, Kenneth Slack paints a gloomy picture of the ecclesiastical scene in a land that was once one of the great bastions of Protestantism.

"To revise and in considerable measure rewrite a book on the British churches at the close of the sixties has been a sobering and very depressing experience. The revision of the statistics alone has all too fully confirmed the personal impression gained of the accelerating decline of the church as an institution throughout the period. . . . Passage after passage of the book written in 1960 has seemed strangely optimistic and has had to be excised. To write in 1969 is to be led to wonder whether at the end of another decade the whole institution of the church will not have changed its shape so drastically as to demand not a further revision (were a further edition called for) but a totally different book trying to account for what has happened. It is still possible to write of the British churches today in the light of history; shortly the operation may assume more the character of archaeology burrowing beneath a collapsed edifice."¹

The story is much the same among liberally-oriented churches in the United States. According to Leslie H. Woodson "Sunday school and worship attendance is declining as is church membership in (the) liberally-oriented denominations. For several years the largest Protestant denomination in the ecumenical movement (United Methodist) has reported a net loss of between 100,000 and 200,000 members annually."²

WHAT HAS CAUSED THIS DECAY?

When we ask, "Why? What is the cause of this deplorable and reprehensible decay?" Two answers are immediately forthcoming.

First, the church has suffered a massive onslaught from without in the evident triumph of an aggressive secularism, an affluent materialism, and an assertive scientific humanism.

The church today has also fallen to a vicious fifth-column attack from within in

Alfred S. Jorgensen

the destruction of the faith by both the older “modernism” and the more recent “liberalism.” To cite Dr. Woodson once more: “With the struggle of the ecumenical church toward union there has been a watering down of doctrine and an eclipse of cherished theological traditions.

“Doctrine is cast into the melting pot with a thousand ‘religious ideas’ and the people are served an insipid concoction which neither satisfies the palate nor nourishes the spirit.

“Multitudes within the mainline denominations are finding nothing distinctive anymore about the church. It is no different from the world outside. And if it is no different, then why bother about it?”³

It is not surprising, therefore, that multitudes are leaving the church, either to give religion away altogether, or to find some spiritual home. As a result we have the formation of independent evangelical churches. May I say in parenthesis that some of these churches are extremely sound in their theology of the law and the gospel. They have seen the fruitage of the fair-weather antinomianism of previous generations.

Consequently, they realize that the only way the current tide of lawlessness can be arrested is to proclaim the sanctions and sanctity of the Ten Commandments. They recognize, too, that the gospel only makes sense when the moral law is first preached.

We also have the mushrooming of thousands of

“home” churches across the United States, as well as the growth of such groups as Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons—to say nothing of accessions to the Oriental religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism.

Unfortunately, many disillusioned church members are becoming involved in the charismatic movement because of the seemingly warm evangelical fellowship it offers. Even Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants are jumping onto the bandwagon of the movement, for they see in it the means of achieving the organic union of Christendom that the ecumenical movement has failed to accomplish.⁴

WHY HAVEN’T SDA’S BEEN ENGULFED?

How has it come about that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been engulfed by this enveloping apostasy? Actually, it might already have gone that way had not one of the major denominational crises at the turn of the century been resolved the way it was. I refer to the Kellogg crisis, the real significance of which has sometimes been obscured by other controversial problems with which the church became involved at that time.

With all due respect for the case, made out in some quarters in favor of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg as being roughly handled by Elder A. G. Daniels and others, the plain fact appears to be that Kellogg became infected by the liberal theological thought of his day. For what Ellen G. White in her correspondence with him called “pantheism” is virtually

the view of God that is widely held in these times. Admittedly, the extremely “advanced” concept of God as the “ground of all being,” goes far beyond anything Kellogg ever taught, yet his notions at least were in the same ballpark.

However, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was not at that time railroaded into apostasy, owing to the direction given it by “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” “the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 12:19; 19:10). In a word, the *shape* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as evangelical, conservative, biblical, creationist, Sabbath-keeping, and missionary-minded is largely the product of the gift of prophecy with which it was endowed.

It would be easy at this stage for us to sit back and console ourselves that our troubles are over. But this is not so. The Kellogg crisis was simply the alpha. The omega, which is to be of an even more startling nature, has yet to appear.⁵

THE ALPHA-OMEGA APOSTASY

The alpha was concerned with theories. Ellen G. White wrote: “*Living Temple* contains the alpha of these theories.”⁶ What were these theories? Mrs. White was extremely precise in delineating them, for she gives us a clear blueprint of the Apha-Omega apostasy. She stated unequivocally that if Dr. Kellogg had his way, if our leaders were indoctrinated with his ideas, and if these speculations eventually came to be the established teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the following

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and error.

developments would take place:

1. The basic biblical theology of Seventh-day Adventism would be changed, and a speculative theology substituted for it.⁷ And “fanciful and spiritualistic interpretations of the Scriptures, interpretations which undermine the foundations of our faith” would be introduced.”⁸

2. The logical result of the acceptance of this new theology would be the complete destruction of the Christian faith.⁹

3. The methodology by which this change would be effected would be by mingling truth and error.¹⁰

Anyone who knows his way around in theology will have no difficulty in identifying these theories. They are being preached in a thousand pulpits today, expounded in seminary textbooks, and discussed in learned theological journals. They are the meat and drink, the current fare, of pastoral ministry in the liberal wings today.

A SIMILAR CRISIS TODAY

Now if what Ellen G. White wrote concerning the alpha of apostasy, as it raised its head in the Kellogg crisis, makes any sense at all, we may well anticipate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will once again be confronted with a similar crisis, only of a greater magnitude. Her exact words were: “Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We

have now before us the Alpha of this danger. The Omega will be of a most startling nature.”¹¹

Inasmuch as it was through the ministry of the Spirit of Prophecy that our church was saved from the Alpha of apostate theories, we can understand, therefore, why the very last deception of Satan will be to undermine confidence in this gracious gift.

“There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded.”¹²

Incidentally, Satan can accomplish this just as effectively by a fanatical use of the Ellen G. White writings as by challenging its validity and denigrating its influence as a divinely inspired source of direction for the remnant church.

PRESSURES ON ADVENTISM TODAY

In view of these observations concerning what has happened in our past history, we are entirely justified in asking, “What kind of pressures are impinging today upon Seventh-day Adventism?”

There are three matters specifically to which attention should be called—three matters which would stand at the head of any observer’s list.

1. *Theological Liberalism.* We already called attention to what is its characteristic

attitude and viewpoint—the substitution of human authority and judgment, human reason, for divine revelation, as issuing in the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as the inscribed Word of God. We have also seen what inroads it has made into the churches of our day, and with what ghastly results. But can we, as a church, ignore it?

Concerning this let us be very clear. Seventh-day Adventists, as individuals, do not possess any inbuilt mechanism that automatically secures them against deception and error.

2. *Secularism.* Secularism, “that which pertains to the current age,” is, of course, simply what an older generation of Seventh-day Adventists called “worldliness,” that insidious process by which we are squeezed into the world’s mold in conformity to its prevailing customs and conventions that in the spirit of compromise, all too often passes for tolerance in our accommodated society.

However “old hat” as it may sound, the plain fact is that no form of permissiveness is ever condoned anywhere in the Word of God. Existentially-oriented situation ethics are “strange fire,” if ever there was any. Our church is only as secure as the homes of its members, and its homes, in turn, are only as secure as the morals of its members.

3. *Charismatics.* In the tremendous upsurge of psychic phenomena that is currently taking place, charismatics have sprung to the front and

captured both the imagination and involvement of the churches.

The charismatic theology underlying the experience of praise-singing usually involves spirited singing by the congregation. The songs selected are usually choruses composed of short lines and are often repetitious and/or rhythmic, accompanied by musical instruments, clapping, and swaying.

Seventh-day Adventists ought to recognize the charismatic movement for what it is—a short-circuit mysticism that by-passes very largely the divine revelation given in the Word of God and exalts a so-called “core experience of the Holy Ghost” in place of the reality of the new birth and a life of faith in Christ and obedience to His commandments.

HOW CAN WE RESIST PRESSURES

We thank God that thus far the Seventh-day Adventist Church has resisted the tremendous pressures that are impinging upon it. But where do we go from here? What of the future? How can we ensure the church’s continued fidelity to the faith? Let me offer two or three suggestions:

By our own earnest adherence to the platform of truth and the foundation upon which it is established, for this is no time for us to undertake the building of some new structure.

By revitalized preaching of the fundamental doctrines and distinctive emphases of the faith the remnant church.

To do this we will need to

bring the changes on:

a. the reality of divine revelation and the final authority of the Holy Scriptures;

b. the personality of God; His presence as sovereign by the Holy Spirit; His availability as Savior in our Lord Jesus Christ, through whose atoning passion our redemption was accomplished;

c. the creation and government by God; the absolutes of the moral law, expressed in the Ten Commandments; the accountability of all men before the judgment bar of the omnipotent God; the Seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the sign of loyalty to Jehovah.

d. the intercession of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary; the investigative judgment; the ultimate destruction of the whole economy of evil;

e. the Second Coming of the Lord as the only hope of the world; and

f. the standards (moral, health, dress) by which the purity of the faith is expressed in the lives of believers.

Some may object, saying, “Isn’t this putting the accent on theology, on doctrine, on belief, as such? Shouldn’t we rather be preaching Christ?” I ask you, How else can you preach Christ than through doctrine? Indeed, a theology that is not Christ-centered and Christ-circumferenced is no theology at all!

By a continued respect for the traditions of Seventh-day Adventism we can avoid being deceived by new ideas, new preachers that are mulling around into our camp.

By this I mean an appreciation of the evident providence in the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and, may I add, a recognition of the excellent scholarship of the founding fathers of the faith (despite their lack of formal academic training).

CONCLUSION

How better can I conclude this article than by bringing to you the appeal of the one whom God called to be His special messenger to the remnant church? “We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth?”¹³ **E**

Notes:

¹ Kenneth Slack, *The British Churches Today* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc.), Introduction to the second edition, p. ix.

² Leslie H. Woodson, “Change in the Church,” *Moody Monthly*, May, 1973.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Kevin M. Ranaghan, “Catholics and Pentecostals Meet in the Spirit,” *Logos Journal*, Nov.-Dec., 1971, pp. 20, 21.

⁵ See *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 192-208.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204. *Ibid.*, p. 199. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Alfred S. Jorgensen, pastor, evangelist, and administrator in Australia, This article was written when Elder Jorgensen was Field Secretary of the South Pacific Division.

“We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth?”



The Importance of Adult Interaction With Children

Virginia Smith

The White House in Washington, D.C., *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* magazines, plus many radio and television programs and secular publishing houses are now helping the Department of Children's Ministries do its work. You would have to have been almost dead over the last few months to miss all the messages being broadcast and published about the importance of interaction with children. Emotional experience is the basis of the mind's growth, and interaction during those critical first years actually determines the physical brain structure throughout the rest of a person's life.

At birth a baby's brain cells are already wired for more than 50 trillion connections. Within the first few months of life, that number will soar to more than 1,000 trillion. However, emotions and experiences are required to put into use this enormous potential. Interactions determine how many of the connections will be used and how many unused ones will wither away. Only live interactions count, not television "noise." Apparently there must be an emotional relationship accompanying information that is heard or seen in order for new strong linkages to develop in the young brain.

Emotional experience is the basis of the mind's growth, and interaction during those critical first years actually determines the physical brain structure throughout the rest of a person's life.

Just as surely as exciting possibilities exist in a positive environment, negative consequences result when children repeatedly face fear, stress, abuse, or neglect. These damaging emotions are paralyzing to positive learning. Such trauma promotes brain connections and hormone levels that will cause adverse effects throughout life. A church community has more than an ethical responsibility to protect children. Brain structure and resulting behavior and emotional patterns throughout life depend on the environment babies and children experience with adults from the earliest days of life.

That newborn who seems so incapable of learning is already paying close attention to every sound. At four days of age, a baby can already distinguish one language from another by sucking more strongly while listening to the mother tongue than another language being spoken. But babies pay attention to all language sounds. However, by 12 months, an infant has already stopped paying attention to language sounds not commonly heard. From then on, learning the sounds of new languages will become more and more difficult throughout life.

Vocabulary development is another area that

shows the importance of interaction. The more time children spend interacting with adults, the more advanced their language use. The more parents use complex sentence structure in speaking to their children, the more their children will do so. The size and difficulty of the words is no deterrent for children. Those who are surrounded by swearing will soon be swearing experts. Children who are immersed in Bible vocabulary will naturally incorporate the same words into their everyday communication.

Future interpersonal relationships and success in educational settings spring from a sequence of four skills that develop very early in life in emotional intimacy with care-givers.

1. Attention. A nursing baby loves to stare intently at mommy or the person holding the bottle. This is not a haphazard behavior. Baby is practicing focusing attention, an important skill for future education.
2. Strong relationships. Smiles and hugs and kisses teach a baby early that love feels good. The most important gift that parents give a child is unrelated to things or status; it is the gift of time, plenty of time, to establish bonds of love in strong relationships.
3. Communication. The sounds babies make are soon interpreted by a sensitive care giver. A give-and-take pattern of communication takes place that models the same types of conversation they will need to use in school.
4. The ability to reflect on personal understanding. Within two years a child who has participated in numerous interactions will be reflecting on what he understands and what he considers confusing. This prepares him to monitor his own learning, an invaluable skill throughout life.

The church community is an ideal setting for increasing the amount of interaction available to a child. Church members share basic values and positive standards that can enrich the mind and

character. Church activities provide unlimited opportunities for participation and interaction. Even for babies, Sabbath school with visual aids provides practice in focusing attention, building relationships, communicating, and thinking about ones' understanding. Within a few years children, are capable of being involved in all the activities of the church. Adults do not need to spend long hours preparing complicated activities or spending large amounts of money buying high tech-toys. The easiest, cheapest, simplest things we can do with and for children are the best. Talking, playing, reading, and praying with the children are activities



available around the world. They provide the ideal settings for developing secure emotional relationships that provide the foundation for positive learning experiences, while bonding the hearts of the children to us, to Christ, and to the Adventist Church. **E**

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When Religion Gets Sick

John 2: 15-16.

Introduction

1. *Jesus was concerned with sick religion.*
 - a. His concern was reflected when He drove the money changers out of the temple.
 - b. Much of Judaism had become sick.
 - c. The Great Physician sought to bring healing.
2. *Religion can get sick.*
 - a. Not all things under the name "religion" are good. What did Jesus see in the temple that caused such aggressive action?

I. The Lost Sense of Awe and Respect for God

1. *The Jews had lost the profound sense of awe and respect for God* (John 2: 14).
 - a. Look carefully at what Jesus observed when He visited the temple.
 - b. Many Jewish patrons were coming and going.
 - c. They had little respect for what should take place in the temple—communion with God.
 - d. They bought and sold animals, and they exchanged money as if the court of the Gentiles was a marketplace.
 - e. God had intended the temple to be a meeting place for human beings and Himself. He had not intended the temple to be a den of thieves. He wanted it to be a place of prayer.

Ellen G. White describes what Jesus saw. "A great number of sacrifices were offered at the time of the Passover, and the sales at the temple were very large. The consequent confusion indicated a noisy cattle market rather than the sacred temple of God.

There could be heard sharp bargaining, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, mingled with the chinking of coin and angry disputation. So great was the confusion that the worshipers were disturbed, and the words addressed to the Most High were drowned in the uproar that invaded the temple. The Jews were exceedingly proud of their piety. They rejoiced over their temple, and regarded a word spoken in its disfavor as blasphemy; they were very rigorous in the performance of ceremonies connected with it; but the love of money had overruled their scruples. They were scarcely aware how far they had wandered from

the original purpose of the service instituted by God Himself" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 155).

2. *Christians often can lose their sense of awe and reverence for God.* As people go about the routine of Bible study and church attendance, they can lose sight of reverence for God.
 - a. The Lord, His church, and His Book can become rather ordinary objects and routines. The Lord Himself can be viewed as a common person.
 - (1) This happened with Eli's wicked sons (1 Sam. 2:12-17).
 - b. The anger of Jesus is aroused when He sees a lost sense of awe and reverence for His Father.
 - c. Religion gets sick when the sense of the wonder of God departs from a person or a group of people.

II. The Lost Sense of the Cost of Religion

1. *The Jews had lost sight of the cost of serving the Lord.*
 - a. The presentation of the animals in temple sacrifices represented a commitment on the part of the worshiper.
 - (1) God wanted the Jews to present the best animal from their flocks. This meant that they gave their best to God.
 - b. When Jesus walked into the temple, He saw that religion had been made cheap. People were told, "Leave your animals at home, and buy one in the temple" (John 2:16).
 - c. Purchasing the animal from the temple merchants cheapened the sacrificial system. This made the Master angry.
2. *Modern Christians have lost sight of the cost of commitment.*

"With searching glance, Christ takes in the scene before Him as He stands upon the steps of the temple court. With prophetic eye He looks into futurity, and sees not only years, but centuries and ages. He sees how priests and rulers will turn the needy from their right, and forbid that the gospel shall be preached to the poor. He sees how the love of God will be concealed from sinners, and men will make merchandise of His grace" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 157).

 - a. Following Christ and belonging to a church have become cheap.
 - b. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, the great German pastor from

World War II, said that when Jesus calls a man to follow Him, He calls him to die to himself. Nothing short of total commitment will satisfy the Savior.

III. The Lost Sense of the Outsiders

1. *The Jews had lost the sense of need of the Gentiles.*
 - a. The place where the money changers and merchants transacted business was in the court of the Gentiles.
 - (1) This was a place within the temple precinct where Gentiles, outsiders, could come and learn of the Lord.
 - (2) Most of the Jews in Jesus' time were not concerned about Gentiles.
 - (3) They were concerned about rituals but not for

the mission God had given them. This mission was to be a blessing to the nations.

2. *Modern Christians can lose the sense of the outsider.*
 - a. The church can easily become an exclusive club with a preoccupation for its membership.
 - b. Religion gets sick when people turn inward and do not look outward for the sinners.

Conclusion

1. How is the health of your Christian expression?
2. If you do not mind, let's have a check-up.
3. Does the greatness and grandeur of God thrill you?
4. Or are you taking shortcuts? Are you asking for the minimal requirements?
5. What about your concern for others? Let's keep our religion healthy and growing. MB

You Can Have a Happy Family

Matthew 6: 33 RSV

Introduction

1. There might be a question in your mind about the worthiness of setting the goal that the family be happy.
 - a. Happiness is certainly not the goal of the gospel for our lives. Obedience to God must always take precedence over "the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11: 25).
 - b. But if we define happiness as a sense of well-being, of contentment, of joyful purpose in living, then happiness is, at least, what most people are looking for in life.
2. In this passage before us, Jesus has not dismissed that need as a superficial desire, but here He focuses on how an individual and a family can find true happiness. We don't have to be anxious about life . . . although we often are (verses 25, 27-28, 31, 34).
3. There is a way to find happiness in the midst of our living! And Jesus wants us to find it. But first we need to recognize that we can miss happiness in a frantic effort to gain it for our family.

I. Ways We Miss Having a Happy Family

1. *We miss having a happy family when we are never satisfied with what we have.*

- a. It is fine to be people of vision and anticipate the future, but don't miss the taste of now and the colors of the present moment.
 - (1) Happiness is not some magical state of existence finally discovered over the next mountain of life.
 - (2) Happiness is happening to you along the way, in the midst of life.
 - (3) People who seek happiness on the other side of the mountain are those who try to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They never will get there.
 - b. The tragic truth is that many families run right past happiness thinking it is somewhere else.
 - (1) Don't miss the gift of joy a child's smile can bring today.
 - (2) Don't miss the explosion of wonder a child's question can set off in your heart.
 - (3) Don't miss the gift of love your wife or husband would bring to you today.
 - c. You will miss that moment if you are not paying attention!
2. *We miss having a happy family when we value happiness too much.*
 - a. If you would rather be happy than committed to

one another, if you would rather be happy than courageous, if you would rather be happy than responsible, if you would rather be happy than right, then you will never really be happy at all.

- b. Husbands and wives who value happiness more than the sincere effort to be together in fidelity and love will not be happy for long.
 - c. People who seek happiness in one marriage or one affair after another are deceived into believing that happiness is a gift someone else can give. The truth is happiness must come from within.
3. *We miss having a happy family when we are not willing to do the will of God.*
- a. If we will not seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He cannot give us the desires of our hearts (Matt. 6: 33).
 - b. The will of God does not always lead us to easy tasks or give us smiles and laughter.
 - (1) Sometimes we walk with Him through the darkness of suffering or in the outer reaches of rejection as we seek to follow Him.
 - (2) But the testimony of Christians has been that deep joy can be known by obeying Him and being loyal to His will.
 - c. Hear what Paul says in Romans 8: 18.

II. Ways We Can Have a Happy Family

1. *We can have a happy family when we value each other* (Matt. 6: 26).
- a. Our heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air.
 - (1) What about us? He values us more than the birds of the air, so be content that He will care for you.
 - (2) Our Creator values us and no one can take this away from us.
 - b. People are happy when each member of the family recognizes that every member has value.
 - (1) People are unhappy when they do not treasure one another at home.
 - (2) Each of us is God's gift to the other members of our family.
 - (3) It is God who stands behind the value of every person and guarantees it.
 - c. The next time you are tempted to ignore your children or shout at your spouse or ridicule someone's efforts, remember you are dealing with someone God loves and has created and shared with you for your joy and fulfillment.
2. *We can have a happy family when we understand that life is more than externals* (Matt. 6: 25).
- a. Life is more than food and drink, clothes and shelter.
 - (1) As important as they are, they are not the goal of life. It is ironic that many Christian congregations discuss food, clothing, and houses as status symbols, while in much of the world

that same discussion is a debate about survival.

- (2) It isn't just food, but dining at the "right" restaurants! It isn't just jeans, but designer jeans! It isn't just a house, but the address that we're interested in! God save us from making the excuse that we have poor giving habits because our bills are so high. Much of our world does not have the luxury of even having bills!
- b. A happy family emphasizes that necessities and desires of life motivate them to work and be thrifty, but they are not consumed by a passion for gadgets and expensive toys . . . nor anxious about life's essentials. Jesus does not say "don't worry about food and clothing because they are unimportant." Just the opposite.
 - (1) In verses 32-33, Jesus asserts that the Father knows we need those things and He will provide them! They are important, so God will not leave their provision entirely up to us. He intends to provide for His own!
3. *We can have a happy family when we find the purpose in life God has for our family* (Matt. 6: 33).
- a. When a family sees itself as a unit of love and service that can be offered to God for His use in blessing and redeeming His world, that family is on its way to happiness. Happiness is what happens to us on our way to doing the will of God !
 - b. Illustration. A wise pastor was able to raise four children who never felt it necessary to rebel against the church . Their father helped them to feel, all through his ministry, that the family was a partnership in offering their lives to God for His service. There were spiritual and intellectual struggles with personal faith but these were finally resolved. They never resented the ministry their father sought to do, because they considered themselves to be a part of it.
 - c. A family is happy when they commit themselves to first seek the kingdom of God. This verse reminds us of the necessity of setting priorities for life.
 - (1) If God and His will are first, then nothing can be above or before Him. When God is at the center of life, everything else fits into place.
 - (2) Parents can help their children if, by example and precept, they teach them how to live, loving God as they love nothing else and loving their neighbor as they love themselves.

Conclusion

You can have a happy family. Even though it won't be easy, it is possible. You won't be happy every day — there will be times when you will go through painful and difficult trauma — but by God grace even those moments can contribute to the growing joy and happiness you will find as you live and grow together within His will and loving care. **E**

Reading The Bible in the Pulpit

Gordon Palmer

The power of the gospel can be effectively demonstrated by the manner in which the Bible is read from the pulpit. The Bible is God's inspired message concerning Himself, men, sin, redemption, His relation to man, man's relation to Him, and man's relation to man. God has inspired the Bible as no other book is, or ever has been, inspired.

*This Book unfolds Jehovah's mind,
This Voice salutes in accents kind,
This Friend will all our needs supply,
This Fountain sends forth streams of joy.
This Name affords us boundless wealth,
This Good Physician gives us health.
This Sun renews and warms the soul,
This Sword both wounds and makes us whole.
This Letter shows our sins forgiven,
This Guide conducts us safe to heaven.
This Charter has been sealed with blood,
This Volume is the WORD OF GOD.¹*

READING AS AMBASSADORS OF GOD

When we read the Bible in public we are God's ambassadors, the bearers of His gospel of salvation to all within the range of our voice. As "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," so again His Word must be given through the medium of human personality. The Scriptures have been translated into all languages. Its message is a timeless, dateless communication for all mankind, even for mankind yet to come. Through the Bible all men may find life and "life abundantly." Let us give these directions clearly to the sincere seeker after truth and eternal life.

THE WORD OF GOD

The Bible is the Word of God and must be read as the Word of God. Bible reading is different from the reading of a sermon. The Bible is God-inspired. The elder does not always convince his people that his sermon is God-inspired. Not always is he convinced himself that what he says in his sermon is "moved by the Holy Spirit."

The Bible is Truth. It is "sharper than any two-edged sword." It is the "discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." The entrance of this truth always

gives light. It would be wonderful if this could be said of every sermon. But all too often, when preachers handle the Bible carelessly they are even more careless about their sermons. Carelessness and crudeness in Bible reading are reflected often in the minister's sermonizing.

It is folly for the preacher to orate about the Bible being the Word of God and read it more poorly than a child reads Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. It is superb to hear the preacher extol the sacred Scriptures, but it is "unpardonable sin" to hear him deny every word of God by the thoughtless manner in which he reads the inspired page. It is possible for a man to grow eloquent about his faith in the Bible and repudiate every truth of the Bible by the slovenliness with which he speaks and handles the Holy Word. The very best readers of the Bible should be men who believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.

GOOD BIBLE READING AND STUDY

Good Bible reading is the result of much study. It is necessary to find out who wrote the passage, under what circumstances it was written, for what purpose it was written, to whom it was written, and what the writer meant and hoped to accomplish through his message, etc. The elder also should find out what is God's message in the passage he is reading to the people of today. This means work. It means hard work. But he who surrenders himself to the task of rightly expounding the Bible by the inspired manner in which he reads it will be a great benediction to the people who want to know the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Men are longing to hear God speak again. Help Him speak through you.

Preachers can afford to spend hours with the Bible, reading it aloud until they can again hear the Lord's voice in every syllable, in every line, and in every verse, saying, "My word shall not return unto me void. It shall accomplish the thing whereunto I have sent it." Perhaps one of the reasons for the large congregations attending the churches of modern cults can be traced to the large place given to the reading of the Bible without comment, even though it is followed by portions from their guidebook. "The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discerner of

the thoughts and intent of the heart" (Heb. 4: 12).

A BOOK OF ACTION

The Bible is the most capable Book in the world for moving people to action in the field of human relationships. When the Bible is read intelligently and naturally, it stirs the whole range of human emotions. It stimulates the intellect, rouses lofty passions, and fires the will. It comforts. It challenges. It condemns and it calms. It convicts and it converts. The Bible is always the Book of Life!

ATMOSPHERE OF THE BIBLE

The elder must dwell in the atmosphere of the Bible. He must fellowship with the personalities of the Scripture and saturate his mind and soul with the message of the Old and New Testaments in order to demonstrate the power of the gospel through the public reading of the Bible.

A young minister once asked a noted actor, "Why is it that you, dealing with fiction, draw larger crowds than ministers who deal with truth?" The actor replied, "I preach fiction as if it were truth; you preach truth as if it were fiction." There is basic truth in this declaration. Actors study their plays thoroughly. Each endeavors to live the whole story and particularly the part he is to play, until he incarnates the character.

The elder must give himself to the task of mastering the art of Scripture reading more enthusiastically than does the actor in playing his part.

THE ART OF REPRODUCING THE TRUTH

When the preacher has mastered the truth of the Bible, he must then master the art of reproducing that truth. There is a large library of literature on this subject in most city public libraries.

Attention must be given to the importance of inflection, proper pronunciation, and faultless articulation; the significance of emphasis, overemphasis, and underemphasis; the value of the pause, how rhythm affects good reading, and the necessity for correct and clear enunciation. Failure in any of these essentials can make the reader guilty of misinterpreting the Word of God. Men may be forgiven for blundering through their preaching, but they will never be forgiven if they read the Bible in such a manner as to make the Scriptures say something God never said nor intended to say.

CLEAR VOICE AND CLEAR SPEECH

The cultivation of a good voice is indispensable to excellent Scripture reading. The Bible emphasizes the necessity of clear speech. When Jesus spoke it is recorded that "He opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt.

50:2). "He opened his mouth" is no rhetorical phrase. There is the mellow sweetness of music in these words. They imply that Jesus spoke the revealed Word of God in a voice that was resonant and unmistakably clear. Study the prayers of Jesus, His conversations, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, and you will feel the pathos, passion, and persuasion of the great Teacher in His desperate concern for mankind. Concern produces clarity. Carelessness in speech is "unpardonable" in the servant of God.

Some tragic parodies of the Gospel have been caused because of the neglect of the preacher to use his voice properly and to speak distinctly.

A child, seeing the preacher immerse some people in a baptismal ceremony, was greatly impressed by the uniqueness of the service. The minister used the Trinitarian formula but mumbled through it in such a way that the child could not grasp the significant term "Holy Ghost." Imagine the shock her mother received when she saw the child immersing her dolly, and how she was still more surprised when she heard the child say, "Into the name of the Father and of the Son, and into the hole he goes."

Illustrations of this kind can be multiplied, which condemn some preachers as unfaithful servants of the Son of God. It is the business of the elder to expound the Word and to explain the will of God and to lift the morale of the community. This cannot be effectively accomplished if the people do not understand what the elder says.

When George Whitefield preached in Philadelphia, it is stated that his words could be heard two miles away. In an open-air service of 10,000, the people could hear and understand every word and syllable. His voice was rich, resonant, and "clear as a bell." Lawyers and statesmen, rich and poor alike, were thrilled and melted by the power of his spoken word.

Everyone may not possess such a wonderful voice. Nevertheless, everyone can have a better voice than they have if they will follow the laws of vocal improvement and pay the price of persistent exercise. Let us follow the exhortation of the prophet: "Therefore, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show the people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins" (Is. 58:1). And Paul the Apostle challenges us with his disturbing question, "If the trumpet hath an uncertain sound, who will answer the call to battle" (1 Cor. 14:8). **E**

¹ Quoted by the author in *Manual of Church Service*, p. 15.

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Unity and Organization



Ellen G. White

As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.

Yet there was strong feeling against it among our people. The first-day Adventists were opposed to organization, and most of the Seventh-day Adventists entertained the same ideas. We sought the Lord with earnest prayer that we might understand His will, and light was given by His Spirit that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church—that organization was essential. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth.

We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by providence. We engaged in the work organization, and marked prosperity attended this advance movement.

As the development of the work called upon us to engage in new enterprises, we were prepared to enter upon them. The Lord directed our minds to the importance of the educational work. We saw the need of schools, that our children might receive instruction free from the errors of false philosophy, that their training might be in harmony with the principles of the word of God. The need of a health institution had been urged upon us, both for the help and instruction of our own


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 would be great
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 successfully.”*


people and as a means of blessing and enlightenment to others. This enterprise also was carried forward. All this was missionary work of the highest order. (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 26).

NECESSITY OF HARMONIOUS ACTION

While it is true that the Lord guides individuals, it is also true that He is leading out a people, not a few here and there, one believing this thing, another that. Angels of God are doing the work committed to their trust. The third angel is leading out a people, and they should move with him unitedly.

Those who were in our work at the beginning are passing away. Only a few of the pioneers of the cause now remain among us. Many of the heavy burdens formerly borne by men of long

experience are now falling upon younger men.

This transfer of responsibilities to laborers whose experience is more or less limited is attended with some dangers against which we need to guard. The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from our fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe. By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. They declare that they will not take any man's say-so; that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan's special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren.

Herein lies a grave danger to the prosperity of our work. We must move discreetly, sensibly, in harmony with the judgment of God-fearing counselors; for in this course alone lies our safety and strength. Otherwise God cannot work with us and by us and for us.

Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in

his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time.

WE MUST BE TOGETHER

Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.

The spasmodic, fitful movements of some who claim to be Christians is well represented by the work of strong but untrained horses. When one pulls forward, another pulls back; and at the voice of their master, one plunges ahead, and the other stands immovable. If men will not move in concert in the great and grand work for this time, there will be confusion. It is not a good sign when

men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone. Instead of isolating themselves, let them draw in harmony with their fellow laborers. Unless they do this, their activity will work at the wrong time and in the wrong way. They will often work counter to that which God would have done, and thus their labor is worse than wasted (*Ibid.* pp. 488-489).

There have of late arisen among us men who profess to be the servants of Christ, but whose work is opposed to that unity which our Lord established in the church. They have original plans and methods of labor. They desire to introduce changes into the church to suit their ideas of progress and imagine that grand results are thus to be secured. These men need to be learners rather than teachers in the school of Christ. They are ever restless, aspiring to accomplish some great work, to do something that will bring honor to themselves. They need to learn that most profitable of all lessons, humility and faith in Jesus. . . . Divisions in the church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world, and give occasion to the enemies of truth to justify their course. Paul's instructions were not written alone for the church in his day. God designed that they should be sent down to us" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 5 pp. 238-239). **E**

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She wrote more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist church.

A Final Appeal to the Church

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advantage in the warfare" (*Ibid.*, Dec. 6, 1892).

And then I call attention to a vision the Lord's servant had, in which she saw a ship heading toward an iceberg. She said, "There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, 'Meet it!' There was not a moment's hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder to the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

"Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a voice from our Captain, 'Meet it!' I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided action had come. I must without delay obey the command, 'Meet it!' " (*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 205, 206).

Fellow leaders, it may be that in the not too distant future you will have to meet just such a challenge. I pray God will give you grace and courage and wisdom.

EYES UPON THE MAN OF CALVARY

Finally, "what a wonderful thought it is that the great controversy is nearing its end! In the closing work we shall meet with perils that we know not how to deal with; but let us not forget that the three great powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His purposes to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve Him in righteousness" (*Ibid.*, book 2, p. 391).

What a wonderful assurance we have, that you and I are in God's work. This work is not dependent on any man; it is dependent on our relationship with Him. There is only one way for us to face the future, and that is at the foot of the cross. A church with its eyes upon the Man of Calvary will never walk into apostasy. **E**

Robert Pierson served the church for more than 45 years as pastor, writer, administrator, and finally as its president. This article is an adaptation of his last sermon presented as president of the General Conference.



From the Editor's Pen

Here are some illustrations for your file. They may be useful to you in the future.

DECEPTION

Danny Sampson robbed a bank in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada used a hand-me-down Colt 45 and got \$6,000. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police caught him and confiscated the gun. They sent the gun to their laboratory, as their normal procedure, where it was recognized as a collector's prize. Danny Sampson didn't have to rob a bank; he had a gun worth \$100,000.

DECISIONS

Ronald Reagan had an aunt who liked him a lot and was very kind to him. She took him to the shoe cobbler and told the shoe cobbler that she wanted him to make a pair of custom shoes for young Ronald Reagan. And the cobbler asked, "Do you want square toes or round toes on the shoes?" Ronald hem-hawed around; he didn't know what he wanted. The cobbler said, "That's all right, see me in a couple of days and tell me and I'll make them for you." A couple of days later the cobbler saw him around town and he looked at him and he said, "Do you want square toes or do you want round toes on your shoes?" Ronald said "I don't know." The cobbler responded, "Well, come in a couple of days—your shoes will be ready." Ronald Reagan said when he picked up his shoes one shoe was square-toed and one was round-toed. He said that the shoe cobbler looked at him and said, "This will teach you never to let people make your decisions for you from this time on." And Ronald Reagan said, "I learned right then, make

your decision; if you don't, someone else will."

DISEASES

700,000 babies are being born each year with AIDS. Within 10 years the World Health Organization expects 10 million will be born with AIDS, infected by their mothers while they are still in the womb or shortly thereafter.

FAITH

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright made history. Their motorized vehicle defied the law of gravity and flew through the air. The idea wasn't new. Years before the Wright brothers got off the ground Albert Santos Dumont, a Brazilian living in Paris, had proven that flight was possible. Many people who read those facts couldn't believe that flying would ever become a reality. However, Alberto Santos Dumont believed the facts and mathematical formulas, and he built the first flying machine. When it became airborne, he demonstrated that you have to trust in the facts and act on them if you want results. The same holds true for our Christian lives. We can know a lot of facts about Jesus Christ, but unless we trust and obey, they do us no good.

FAITHFULNESS

Just suppose the Lord would begin to make people as sick as they claim to be on Saturday.

Just suppose the Lord would take away the child you used as an excuse for not being in worship Saturday.

Just suppose the Lord would make people as poor as they say

they are when they are asked to help finance His work.

Just suppose you had to live on ten times what you give to the Lord each week.

Just suppose the Lord would strike all who lie about their giving as He did Ananias and Sapphira.

Just suppose the Lord let some parents look into the future and see what their example and lax control are doing for their children.

Just suppose you had no opportunity to make amends for these things.

FEAR

Illinois is properly proud of its identification with Abraham Lincoln. Elementary school children in Bloomington, Illinois, were asked by their teacher: "If you could talk to President Lincoln, what one question would you like to ask him?" One first grader said he would like to ask him, "Mr. Lincoln, were you afraid when you started first grade?"

FORGIVENESS

Texan Don Nut says he and his wife have been married fifty years. He says that the secret is that they never went to bed without settling any differences between them. But Don concedes there have been times when he went ten days without sleep.

EXAMPLES OF KINDNESS

Little Anne Freezner of McCook, Nebraska, went with her mother on November 6 to vote. The mother, Char Freezner, said that tiny Anne must wait outside while mommy went into the voting booth. The little girl wanted to know what was she going to do in there. Her mother said that she was going to vote for somebody who would look after things and take care of people and be nice to everybody.

While the mother was in the booth little Anne, age 5, explained to one of the election clerks, that mommy was in that little room voting for grandma.

EXAMPLES OF HONESTY

Bring honesty and kindness together and you have a wonderful combination. Rick

Graham was being honest when he drove around the streets of San Francisco for more than an hour to find the lady who had left her purse with \$1,792.00 in cash on the back seat of his cab. He was also being kind, because his action would spare the woman a lot of distress. I like what he said when some of the other drivers ridiculed him for not pocketing the money. "I am a card-carrying member of the Christian faith, and what good is it to go to church if you don't practice what you preach?"

HOPE IN GOD

A popular song in the 1960s dealt with the apparent insignificance of life, asking the question, "Is that all there is?"

Mankind needs hope in order to survive the pressures of the world today.

Many years ago a submarine was rammed by another ship and quickly sank off the Massachusetts coast. Although rescue was impossible at that depth, a diver was dispatched to determine if there was still life aboard the disabled vessel. The diver placed his helmeted ear against the sub's hull and heard a faint tapping sound. Carefully he made note of the dots and dashes and decoded the following question: "is . . . there . . . any . . . hope?" With great remorse he slowly signaled back: "Hope . . . in . . . God . . . alone."

God's Word reminds us that Christ is the hope of the world; indeed Christ is the basis of all human existence. In what do you place your hope?

HYPOCRISY

In his book *Living the Christian Life*, George Duncan told of a remark made at the funeral of Fred Mitchell, chairman of the China Inland Mission. One of the speakers said: "You never caught Fred Mitchell off his guard because he never needed to be on it."

Duncan called that statement "one of the most remarkable tributes I ever heard paid to any Christian." Could the same testimonial be given about you—about me? Remember Jesus' words, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Let's be for real!

Truth as it is in Jesus



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